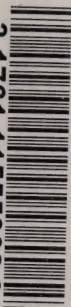


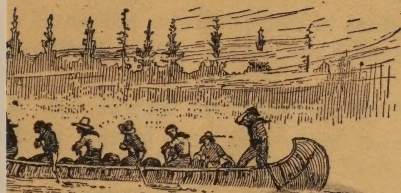
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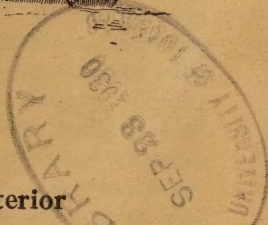
# Ice Routes to Wilson Bay



Department of the Interior  
CANADA

W. W. Cory, C.M.G.  
Deputy Minister

Issued by  
Development Bureau  
C. C. Lynch, Director







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# Canoe Routes

to

# Hudson Bay



Department of the Interior  
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Hon. Charles Stewart  
Minister

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## CANOE ROUTES TO HUDSON BAY

The days of isolation for Hudson Bay are drawing to a close. Dog team in winter and canoe in summer have, until recently, been the principal methods of reaching this inland sea, famed in history and romantic fiction. The aeroplane has penetrated its seclusion, and now the steel of the Hudson Bay railway has reached its shores at Churchill. Rails are also being extended north from Cochrane and will eventually reach James Bay, the southern extension of Hudson Bay, at Moose Factory. Even the white ribbon of motor highways may sometime in the future wind along its inlets.

The canoes of the Indian and fur-trader, in Canada's early days, glided over the water trails east, south and west to and from the Bay. Today the adventurous canoeist finds in journeying through this region a freedom from the cares of the world in which he lives, freedom from contact with familiar everyday scenes, and an absence of contact with his fellow men with the exception of members of his own party and infrequent, chance-met travellers. The professional or business man, the student and city dweller may all find in this region a land of lakes and great rivers to which they can turn to secure complete change from the routine of life. The refreshing scenery, life in the open, and the unaccustomed exercise and habits are bound to create a freshness of mind and a vigour of purpose with which the problems of life may be successfully attacked when the return to

civilization is made after a canoe trip through this wonderful northland of Canada.

As a general rule, it may be said that every river flowing into the southern part of Hudson bay and James bay, was used as a trade route either by the Indians or fur-traders. Travel over some of these routes entailed many miles of paddling and portaging, starting as they did from Montreal and other points of early settlement. Now the construction of railways has shortened the water routes considerably by eliminating the necessity for covering long distances by canoe. Many of the streams traversed at that time are seldom used now, and were at best not suitable for canoe routes, but being the shortest course to the traveller's destination were the only alternative to a very roundabout journey.

On these routes are no palatial hotels, no summer resorts, no country inns where the comforts of home and the identical foods of the daily round are repeated. Here a canvas roof, an upturned canoe or an evergreen lean-to provide shelter from the elements. Silver and white linen give way to serviceable aluminum or metal dishes, and the culinary arrangements are in full view. A drifting breeze may waft to one's nostrils the aroma of steaming coffee, the appetizing fragrance of crisp-bacon, the curl of acrid wood smoke, or the not so pleasant odour of a lump of "dough god" inadvertently dropped on the glowing coals of the open fire.

The air, unpolluted by the smoke of factories, and the exercise of paddling combine to create in the traveller an appetite so ravenous that, no matter how fastidious one may be at the start of a



trip, meal time finds the canoeist eager for "grub" hot from the pot or pan. A miniature mountain of food heaped on a plate disappears with magical swiftness.

One inexperienced in wilderness travel and the navigation of northern rivers would be well advised to employ competent guides. Outfitters located at or near most of the starting-in points for cruises to the Bay, being familiar with the country to be traversed, can supply tents, canoes, suitable equipment and supplies, and also make arrangements for the services of guides. Guides that know the route to be taken are sure to ease the labour and mitigate the danger of travel on unfamiliar waters.

The trips outlined in the following pages are very different from those in the southern part of Canada where touch with civilization is easily maintained. Replenishment of food supplies is difficult, and it is necessary to carry not only sufficient for the trip but a comfortable margin in the event of delays or accidents. Insect pests are troublesome for a great part of the summer, and mosquito "dope" and netting are at certain seasons worth their weight in gold to the tortured traveller. No one should undertake these cruises unless fully prepared to withstand discomforts, delays, the fatigue of portaging heavy loads over rough trails, and the innumerable annoyances which may develop before the cruise is over.

Accessibility of the starting point influences many in their choice of a route to Hudson Bay, and widely divergent as these points are little difficulty should be experienced in locating one that meets all requirements. The routes are all

interesting, and provide a means of enjoying a memorable holiday. The geologist, botanist, nature lover and sportsman, as well as the man to whom the swing of the paddle is pure delight, will never forget a canoe cruise to far-away James or Hudson bays.

In choosing one of the following briefly outlined routes that lead northward, items to be considered are the length of the trip, time required to complete it, character and difficulties of the course, and accessibility of the starting point. Even the shortest of these cruises require a period of weeks, and necessitate the laying of plans and the making arrangements for supplies well in advance of the start.

### LAKE ST. JOHN-LAKE MISTASSINI ROUTE

One route, which reaches Hudson bay from the east, begins at St. Felicien, which is at the end of steel in the Lake St. John region of the province of Quebec. From this point the Ashuapmouchuan river, lakes Nikabau, Obatagama, Chibougama and other smaller lakes and streams are used in the journey to the spreading waters of Lake Mistassini. At the southeast corner of this mighty lake is a post of the Hudson's Bay Company which marks the halfway point between St. Felicien and the Bay.

Lake Mistassini lies north of the height of land, that line which traces an erratic course across the map of Canada. The mere fact of being north of this line engenders in the traveller a feeling of being but an atom in the vast domain of "the old man of the North," for all about, and beyond, is an almost unbroken solitude extending to the Arctic regions.



Should the call of home be too strong to resist, a return route from lake Mistassini is available by the riviere du Chef and lac la Meule. If the unknown adventures that lie ahead and the desire to complete a voyage of discovery to that far-away sea of romance and history cast the die in favour of continuing the cruise, the paddles flash once more as they force the canoe onward, this time to Portage bay, about midway of the western shore of lake Mistassini.

A 200 yard carry is made from the shore of lake Mistassini to the Rupert river, and the west channel of this stream is followed to Miskitenau lake. The Rupert river flows through the eastern end of Miskitenau lake, but the canoe route leaves from the western end and crosses by a series of lakes and portages to Wabistan lake, the headwaters of the Marten river. The Marten river forms the next part of the route, which leads through many lakelike expansions to the junction of the Marten and Rupert rivers. The remainder of the journey is down the Rupert river, carries being made at the quaintly named Oatmeal, Plum Pudding, Smoke Hill and other portages. James bay is reached at Rupert House.

From St. Felicien to lake Mistassini is a journey of 300 miles, and from lake Mistassini to Rupert House is 380 miles, making a total of nearly 700 miles from railway to tidewater.

The return journey may be made by coasting round the foot of James bay to Moose Factory and ascending the Moose river; reaching the railway by either the Abitibi, Mattagami or Missinaibi rivers. The distance from Rupert House to Moose Factory in a direct line is nearly one hundred

miles. This journey would be greatly lengthened by having to follow the shore line as closely as possible were it undertaken in a craft as small as a canoe. Shoals, tides, winds and waves all combine to bespeak the wisdom of employing a larger boat to navigate the shores of this inland sea of more than half a million square miles.

The Mistassini route may be tapped at lake Chibougamau by detraining at Manouan station, on the Canadian National Railway's transcontinental line in northern Quebec, and ascending the St. Maurice river, or from Oskelaneo, a little farther west. A chain of lakes leads north from Oskelaneo to the newly developed mineral area about Chibougamau, and is perhaps the better of the two routes.

### THE BELL, NOTTAWAY AND HARRICANAW RIVERS

As the above mentioned railway line passes through northern Quebec and approaches the Ontario boundary, the Bell river is crossed. This stream flows northward to lake Mattagami, from which lake the Nottaway river flows to James bay. Paralleling the course of these rivers, a short distance westward, is the Harricanaw river. Though it is possible to reach Hudson bay by both of these routes, the difficulty and danger entailed in navigating the swift water and tumultuous rapids in their descent make these rivers unpopular as canoe routes.

The Bell river portion of the route, however, is said to be excellent for canoeing as far as lake Mattagami. There are patches of burnt country along the way but most of it is very beautiful

virgin forest. Between Seneterre on the railway, and lake Mattagami there are sixteen portages and at these points the Quebec Fisheries Company have constructed wooden-railed hand car railways to facilitate the transportation of their catches past obstructions in the river. The rapids, though short, are very dangerous to run, and portaging is the wisest course. If one is unable to secure the use of these hand cars to push his outfit over, the portages will be found to be well cut out and none over a half mile in length.

## NORTHERN ONTARIO ROUTES

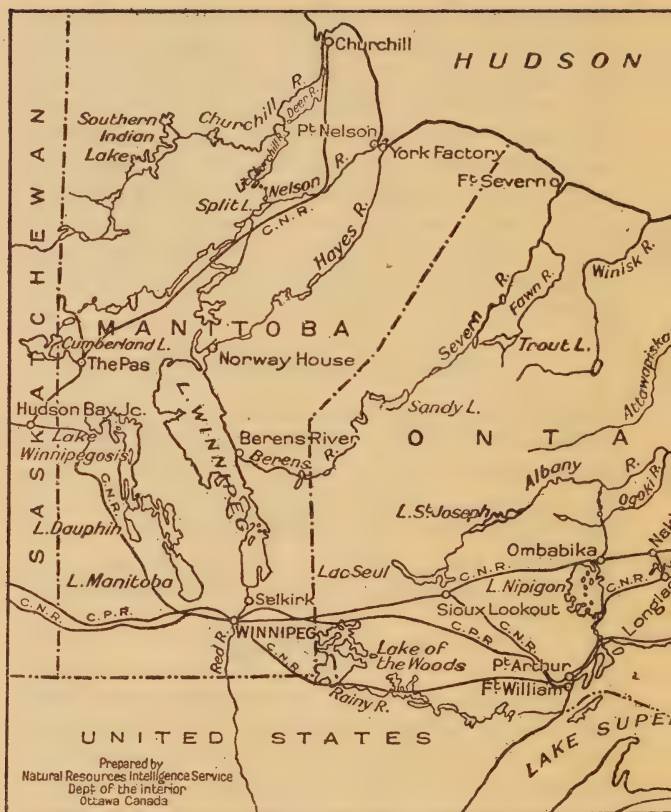
Among northern Ontario routes, three begin near Cochrane and follow streams that unite with the Moose river at various points, then continue down that stream to Moose Factory and James bay. These routes are by the Abitibi, Mattagami and Missinaibi rivers, and the selection of one of the three for a cruise depends upon water and weather conditions.

### THE ABITIBI ROUTE

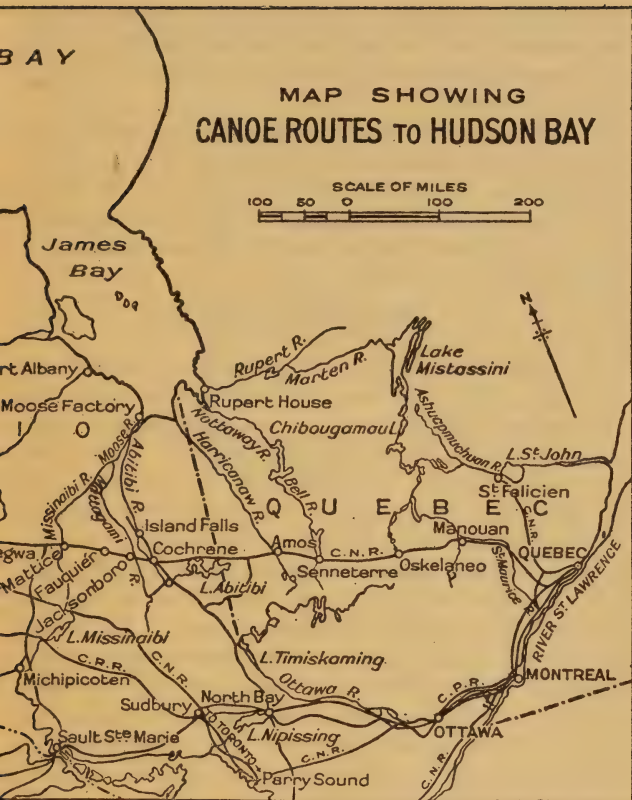
The starting point for the trip down the Abitibi is at Island Falls, a station on the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, 43 miles north of Cochrane. This route, 148 miles in length, is the shortest route to Moose Factory. Extension of the railway is now under way and will permit of transportation of equipment past several bad rapids, possibly as far as the Blacksmith rapids.

The Abitibi is a good river for travelling on, particularly when the water is low, for then some of the rapids can be run, which would have to be portaged by if the water were high. Many of the





falls and rapids require portages, however, at all seasons of the year. The river drains lake Abitibi, a large, shallow expanse of water, consequently the water in the stream is not always clear and it is expedient for travellers to maintain a sharp watch for submerged rocks.



## THE MATTAGAMI ROUTE

Thirty-seven miles west of Cochrane the Mattagami river is crossed by the Canadian National railway, and with medium water this stream provides one of the best and easiest trips to James bay. Jacksonboro is the starting point, but the

Groundhog river, which joins the Mattagami, is sometimes used for the first part of the trip, and in this case the detraining point is Fauquier, a little farther west.

The longest portage on the route is made soon after leaving Smoky Falls, and is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length, but on the remainder of the trip all rapids can be run without danger. The total length of the cruise from the railway to Moose Factory is 204 miles.

### THE MISSINAIBI RIVER

The third of these routes leaves the railway at Mattice, 110 miles west of Cochrane. During the spring and early summer, when the water is high, this route via the Missinaibi river is considered best and easiest. The run down is usually made in seven days, that is if the canoes are manned by two men and are not too heavily loaded.

Most of the heavy rapids are located in the first fifty miles of the cruise, the remainder of the trip being in comparatively clear water. There are numerous rapids and gravel bars in the lower portion of the Missinaibi, making arduous work both in ascending and descending the river, except in the high water period. The Missinaibi and Mattagami rivers join to form the Moose river, and at the junction is Portage island, the head of a chain which extends downstream for twelve miles. Thirty-six miles below the junction of the above named rivers the Abitibi river flows in from the east, and in the Moose river from this point to James bay are many large and small islands.

This cruise can be made much longer by starting in at Michipicoten on lake Superior, and ascend-



ing the Michipicoten river to Missinaibi station on the Canadian Pacific railway. Portaging a few yards from Dog lake to Crooked lake, and again portaging to Missinaibi lake, the Missinaibi river is followed to Peterbell on the Canadian National railway. From lake Superior to Missinaibi is nearly sixty miles, and from that point to Peterbell is approximately fifty miles. Continuing downstream for another ninety miles Mattice is reached. Linked as one continuous route the cruise from lake Superior to Mattice is one or two hundred miles, and with the addition of the remaining portion, from Mattice to Moose Factory, a cruise of 400 miles can be made.

### THE PAGWA, KENOGAMI AND LOWER ALBANY RIVER ROUTE

One hundred miles westward from Mattice on the Canadian National railway the crossing of the Pagwachewan river at Pagwa is reached. During spring and early summer this stream is navigable without portages, although there are numerous stretches of swift water that have to be run with care. A like condition prevails on the Kenogami and lower Albany rivers which form the continuation of the route to James bay. The Pagwachewan or Pagwa river as it is sometimes called, is swift, narrow, and follows a serpentine course in its journey northward, but is not particularly interesting from a scenic viewpoint. Sixty miles from the railway, junction with the Kenogami river is made. The Kenogami is wide and swift, with banks presenting a more shorelike appearance than the tree-hung banks of the Pagwa. There are eighty miles of paddling on the Kenogami before

the Albany forks are reached, and here the Kenogami makes a sudden right turn, and widens to once again its width, forming a baylike expansion. At the end of this sheet of water the Albany river can be seen entering from the left. The remainder of the trip is on the lower Albany where there are 160 miles of paddling down stream to James bay, and this stretch with the sixty miles on the Pagwa, and eighty on the Kenogami make a cruise of 300 miles.

Reports from parties that have made the run from Pagwa to Fort Albany state that the going down is easy, there are no portages, there is no hard work, the scenery is varied, and as the 300 mile run can be made in nine to ten days with loafing en route, it is one of the fastest trips as far as covering distance is concerned.

### ALBANY RIVER ROUTE, VIA LAC SEUL

One of the longest trips that can be taken in northern Ontario with Hudson bay as the ultimate goal, is the route via the Albany river, from Sioux Lookout to Fort Albany. The portages all fall in that portion of the trip which ends at Martin falls, a distance of 330 miles; the remaining 250 miles of the run are free from carries.

Pelican lake, the English river, and the eastern end of lac Seul with its maze of islands, are traversed to the mouth of the Root river, which is ascended, and a portage made across the height of land to picturesque lake St. Joseph. Numerous islands, points, and peninsulas are passed in the sixty-two mile run to Osnaburg House at the eastern end of lake St. Joseph. The Albany river is then entered and its course followed through

many lake expansions to James bay. Fort Albany, an historic Hudson's Bay Company post, is situated on the south side of Albany island, the largest of the delta islands, and marks the end of this 580 mile trip.

The Albany route may be tapped by journeying north from lake Nipigon, either by a chain of lakes, or the Ogoki river. By leaving the railway at Ombabika and taking this course the necessity of threading the maze of islands in lac Seul is obviated, and also approximately 200 miles of river travel with numerous rapids and portages.

### BERENS, FAWN AND SEVERN RIVERS

Selkirk, Manitoba, is the starting point for an interesting 750 mile cruise which ends at Fort Severn on the western shore of Hudson bay. Selkirk is a town on the Red river about twenty miles north of Winnipeg, and from here steamers may be taken to the mouth of the Berens river, about halfway up the eastern shore of lake Winnipeg. If preferred canoes may be employed direct from Winnipeg, down the Red river, and along the shores of lake Winnipeg.

The Berens river is ascended to Family lake, and a succession of lakes, streams, and portages form the route for the 280 miles lying between Family and Sandy lakes. The latter lake is about 40 miles in length, and between it and Severn lake are over 100 miles of river travel. From Severn lake two courses lie open, one following the Severn river throughout, and the other, turning aside by Trout lake and the Fawn river, eventually rejoining the Severn lower down. The Severn river



varies from a half to a third of a mile in width and has a narrow channel. From the forks the course is northeasterly, and while on both the Fawn and this river there are many rapids that necessitate portages in ascending, a great many can be run in making the trip down.

## THE HAYES RIVER ROUTE

Norway House on Little Playgreen lake near the northern extremity of lake Winnipeg is the starting point for another interesting cruise that approaches Hudson bay from the west, and ends at York Factory. The Nelson river is descended for a short distance, then the course turns east by the Echamamish river to Oxford lake, and follows the Hayes river to its mouth. There is considerable fall in this distance of three hundred miles, but the difficulties of navigation are not great in descending, although they are more serious in returning. In the downward journey it is necessary to haul the boat overland at three points, the Echamamish watershed, Robinson portage, and Trout fall. The Robinson portage is 1,300 yards long, but the trail is wide and smooth as a good wagon road. The other two portages are only a few yards in length, the Echamamish one being peculiar in that it is over a low rock which forms the watershed between the east and west channels of this stream. The Cree word "Echamamish," signifies a channel in which the water flows both ways.

An interesting side trip may be made on reaching Oxford lake by turning southward to God's lake and well named Island lake, if one does not

consider the run of 350 miles from Norway House to York Factory a sufficiently lengthy cruise in itself.

### THE NELSON RIVER ROUTE

From the Rocky mountains to Hudson bay is a far cry, yet this journey may be made by canoe following the Saskatchewan river, the Peace, or Athabaska and Churchill rivers with connecting lakes and streams, finally reaching the Bay by the Nelson river. The time necessary to undertake a cruise of this length is at the disposal of few, so the usual starting points for those wishing to journey to the Bay by the Nelson river are either Norway House on lake Winnipeg, or The Pas on the Saskatchewan river. The route from Norway House is by the Nelson river to Split lake, then continues down the Nelson to Port Nelson.

The route from The Pas follows the Saskatchewan river north to Cumberland lake, then turns east by the Goose river to Athapapuskow lake, Cranberry, Reed, and Wekusko lakes. The Grass river and a chain of lakes and streams forms the course to Split lake where junction with the Norway House route is made. About sixty miles down stream from Split lake the Nelson river is crossed by the 1,000 foot span steel bridge of the Hudson Bay Railway, near Kettle rapids. Completion of this railway, with Churchill as the terminus, is now under way.

Thirty miles below Kettle rapids the head of navigation from the Bay is reached, the Long Spruce, and Limestone rapids being passed in this stretch. Fifty-five miles below the head of navigation Seal island is passed, and twelve miles

beyond is Port Nelson on Hudson bay, and the end of a 650 mile cruise.

## THE CHURCHILL ROUTES

Fort Churchill, the terminus of the Hudson Bay railway now under construction, may be reached by canoe by following the Churchill river through Southern Indian lake, and on down to the sea. Many rapids will have to be passed, especially in that portion of the route which lies between the Reindeer river and Nemei river, where there are from ten to twelve portages.

The starting point for the descent of the Churchill river may be McMurray in Alberta, from which point the Clearwater river is ascended to the famous Methy portage, twelve and a quarter miles in length, which is crossed to the Churchill drainage system. The route is not an easy one, and in general consists of a chain of lake expansions separated by stretches of swift water in which numerous portages are necessary.

The Little Churchill river provides a route from Split lake on the Nelson river, which lake may be reached by rail from The Pas, or by canoe from either The Pas or Norway House as mentioned in the descriptions of the Nelson routes above. Split lake is about midway between Churchill and Norway House, about 250 miles of paddling being necessary to reach it from either point. From this lake a portage leads north to Fox and Assear lakes, then the route ascends the Watawi river to Crying lake. Several portages and small lakes are crossed in the six miles between Crying lake and Waiskowa lake, then the descent of the Little



Churchill is made to Recluse lake. A number of rapids occur in this portion of the route, but beyond Recluse lake to the main Churchill little difficulty need be experienced. The Little Churchill flows into the main Churchill about 100 miles above its mouth, and while the trip down stream to the harbour is good, and without portages, the usual course taken by the Indians, who for some reason appear to dread the direct route, is to leave the main river about three miles below the junction of the Little Churchill and portage to the headwaters of the Deer river. The Deer river is crooked, very shallow in places, has much swift water, and is difficult to follow, especially in midsummer when almost continuous portaging is necessary. It empties into the Churchill about 22 miles above the harbour. The remainder of the journey is down the main stream, past Mosquito point, to Churchill harbour, thus completing a 500 mile journey from Norway House. On the completion of the Hudson Bay Railway the return to The Pas may be made by rail.

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Of all the routes leading to Hudson bay the Pagwa trip is, perhaps, the one that can be made with the least expenditure of labour, providing water conditions are favourable. The spell cast by the Mistassini, Albany, Nelson and other routes, with their scenic and other attractions, however, make them preferable to many. The shortest and most travelled routes are those that unite with the Moose river; these are the routes via the Abitibi, Mattagami, and Missinaibi rivers.

G. G. FRASER.

Detailed descriptions and charts for many of these routes to Hudson bay have been prepared by the National Development Bureau, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, and copies of these, or information on many other enjoyable canoe routes in Canada will be sent on request to anyone interested.

